

Summary of Meeting with Representatives of Benton Harbor Petitioners

September 22, 2021

Attendees included:

- For EPA: Radhika Fox, Elizabeth Cisar, and Anita Thompkins (OW); Cheryl Newton, Michael Harris, and Alan Walts (R5); Matthew Tejada (OEJ) and Carrie Wehling (OGC)
- For Michigan: Liesl Clark (EGLE) and Regina Strong
- For Petitioners: Reverend Pinkney, Nick Leonard, Cyndy Roper, Elin Betanzo, Jan Marie Fritz, Ben Pauli, Sylvia Orduno, Melissa May, and Nayyirah Shariff

Opening remarks. After introductions, Radhika Fox summarized the issues raised in the petition that EPA was focusing on: the immediate provision of alternative water, the filter distribution plan, a filter efficacy study related to the Benton Harbor water, and resources for front-line community organizations. She also noted that she had briefed the Administrator who was very supportive of urgent actions to address the Benton Harbor water issues.

Michigan actions. Liesel Clark summarized the ongoing and planned State actions, including working with community groups on an enhanced filter distribution program, an alternative water program until October 8 after there has been assurance of the effectiveness of the filters, enhanced public education, and a longer-term plan for addressing the Benton Harbor water and related public health issues by the end of October. She also mentioned that the State budget included additional resources for a lead service line replacement program for the city. In response to petitioners' request for more specifics of the State filter distribution program, and concerns that the details could be problematic, Radhika suggested a further meeting to focus on the filter distribution plan, to be set up by Alan Walts.

In response to questions about the specifics of the alternative water program, Regina Strong stated that the State would have a alternative water distribution plan by Friday, September 24, that the distribution should begin the following Monday, and that there would be multiple distribution sites, including churches. She noted that adequate storage space was an issue. Several petitioners noted that the end date of October 8 seemed problematic.

Other issues. Cheryl Newton reported on the filter study that EPA had initiated through its Office of Research and Development and noted that EPA would need assistance to gather in-home data. Matthew Tejada reported on funding for community organizations for education and outreach.